

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 05582 170250Z
ACTION INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-12 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-02 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 TRSE-00
IO-14 ACDA-12 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 /095 W
-----054880 170252Z /73

O 170159Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3797

UNCLAS CANBERRA 5582

DEPARTMENT FOR INR

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: UR
SUBJECT: HOST GOVERNMENT PUBLIC REACTION TO SOVIET TRIALS

REF: STATE 178559, CANBERRA 5412

1. IN A STRONGLY WORDED STATEMENT PRIME MINISTER MALCOLM FRASER SAID THAT THE SOVIET UNION'S BEHAVIOR WAS A SOURCE OF INCREASING INTERNATIONAL CONCERN. FRASER SAID THAT A "NEW PHASE" WAS BEING WITNESSED IN THE SOVIET UNION'S PERSECUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT LEADERS. "THESE ARE ALL DISTURBING SIGNS OF THE SOVIET UNION'S FAILURE TO MONITOR MAJOR ASPECTS OF ITS INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOR --- ASPECTS WHICH EXACERBATE WORLD TENSIONS."

2. FRASER SAID THAT AUSTRALIA WAS NOT ALONE IN ITS ATTITUDE, CITING THE RECENT STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE APPREHENSIONS "PLAINLY AND FORCEFULLY VOICED" BY BRITISH PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN. FRASER NOTED PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SAID THE SOVIET UNION MILITARY BUILD-UP " FAR EXCEEDS THE SOVIET UNION'S LEGITIMATE SECURITY NEEDS." THE GOA URGED THE SOVIET
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UNION TO IMPLEMENT THE IMPORTANT PRESENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS EMBODIED IN THE 1977 HELSINKI ACCORDS TO WHICH THE SOVIET UNION "HAD SOLEMNLY AGREED." "WE URGE IT TO CONSIDER THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF THE CAMPAIGN OF REPRESSION OF THOSE WHO HAVE ATTEMPTED TO MONITOR SOVIET COMPLIANCE WITH AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT. IT IS HARD FOR US TO BELIEVE THAT SOVIET LEADERS

INTEND TO HONOR INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND UNDERTAKINGS IF THEY CAN ALLOW SUCH PERSECUTION TO PROCEED."

3. FRASER SAID ONE EXAMPLE OF THE DESTABILIZING EFFECTS OF THE SOVIET PURSUIT OF POWER WAS THE SITUATION IN AFRICA, WHERE THE SOVIET UNION HAD ESTABLISHED A CONSIDERABLE PRESENCE BOTH IN ITS OWN RIGHT AND THROUGH ITS SURROGATE CUBA. "DESPITE THE LOSS OF ITS BERBERA FACILITIES THE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF SOVIET ADVISORS AND CUBAN TROOPS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA, ESTIMATED AT SOME 18,000, HAS AN EFFECT ON THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE AREA AS A WHOLE, INCLUDING THE INDIAN OCEAN." FRASER ALSO NOTED THAT "SOVIET UNION ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN HALTING THE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION, DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE AGREEMENT ABOUT BALANCE OF POWER IN THE INDIAN OCEAN --- DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE A LOWERING OF NAVAL FORCE LEVELS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN."

4. FRASER ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO THE US/USSR DISARMAMENT TALKS NOTING THAT "THE TRIALS OCCUR IN THE VERY WEEK IN WHICH THE US AND THE USSR ARE CONTINUING MAJOR NEGOTIATIONS DESIGNED TO REACH NEW AGREEMENT TO LIMIT STRATEGIC ARMS."

5. IN VICTORIA THE STATE BRANCH OF THE ALP PASSED A UNCLASSIFIED

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MEASURE CONDEMNING AND DEPLORING SOVIET ACTIONS.

6. IN BRISBANE THE LARGEST "CAPTIVE NATIONS WEEK" MARCH IN 10 YEARS LISTENED TO STRONG ANTI-SOVIET SPEECHES FROM LIBERAL MPS AND OTHERS.

7. ADDITIONAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOST GOVERNMENT REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY'S STATEMENTS ON THE ISSUE FOLLOW BY SEPTEL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS, TRIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CANBER05582
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780292-0612
Format: TEL
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780754/aaaabtdt.tel
Line Count: 104
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 32f97f72-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 178559, 78 CANBERRA 5412
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1990743
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HOST GOVERNMENT PUBLIC REACTION TO SOVIET TRIALS
TAGS: SHUM, PEPR, AS, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/32f97f72-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014